

March 2023

Something to Bring to the Table

Stone Soup is a story in which some soldiers traveling home from war found that no one in the villages they stopped at had any food to spare. Noticing the villagers didn't appear to be starving, the soldiers stopped at the next village and they announced that if the village was so destitute that they had no food, they would make some stone soup for all the people. The curious people gathered. They got someone to let them borrow a pot. They filled it with water and some stones they washed well. They added some salt one of them had. Then they kept commenting about how much better the soup would be with some meat, and then some carrots, and then some onions, and then some potatoes.... Each time they mentioned an item one or two people came up with it and it was added to the soup. At the end, they had a thick and good soup that the whole village shared and enjoyed. There are a lot of things that can be learned by this story. When every person is able to contribute to the whole willingly, the result is by far the greatest. Now is a good time to consider what you would have to "bring to the table" in a time of need. Can you store extra of a few food items in your long-term storage? Can you learn and share knowledge and skills? Being prepared may include preparing to help others.

Long-Term Food Storage

This month is a good one for making sure your long-term storage is in order, either organizing it and cleaning out or gathering some more of what you need. If you want more

details about long-term storage go to ProvidentPapers.com. You can look under last year's papers or under the preparedness guide where there is the most information. *Don't forget the Lindon Home Storage Center is one of the best sources for basic, long-term storage items with years of knowledge and in premium packaging. Contrary to rumor, their products are good quality (especially the milk), reasonably priced, and already packaged and ready to buy.

Think Garden Now

March is the time to plan your garden, get seeds and even start some things that do best as starts in our zone (if you are planting from seed). These are things like tomatoes, peppers, some herbs, and winter squash. Sure, it is quite a ways from actually taking care of an outside garden, but now is the time to plan ahead. Once the nighttime temperature is consistently above 15° F it is also time to prune fruit trees and vines. Even if the snow is still coming down, you can be feeling spring and planning. Growing things even inside the house will help with "winter blues." Even growing some quick sprouts for eating can be a fun thing now. (See January 2023 for ideas and light instructions on sprouting. This can be found under 2023 papers on ProvidentPapers.com.) I for one, am glad it is still a bit cold. Hopefully we will have warm days when it is safe for things to bud and blossom without being frozen.

Bean Magic

Beans are one of those "magic things" that get bigger when you soak and cook them. They also last a long time on the shelf, are a nutritious protein or vegetable source, and can be very versatile. How can you beat that for food storage! Do you have old beans from prior storage, and you wonder if they will even cook up without taking a century and being tough? Cook them now and see. Here is a formula for cooking old beans that I picked up a while back. I cook all my beans this way, both old and new. I like it because it makes the beans easier to digest than just plain cooking them.

1. Sort and wash the beans into the pot you want to cook them in.
2. Cover them with water using at least three times the amount of water to beans. Set them to soak at least 8 hours. If I start them soaking in the morning I might leave them until the next day, changing the water once or twice during that time.
3. About 3–4 hours before you want to eat them, rinse them and cover them with water again. Bring them to a boil for 1–2 minutes.
4. Remove from heat. Add 1 teaspoon baking soda for every lb. (2 cups) of beans you started with. If the beans are very old you can add twice as much soda. Stir it in. They will foam a bit. Cover them and let them sit in the soda water for an hour.
5. Drain off the soda water and rinse the beans well.
6. Cover again with water. Bring the beans to a boil and let them simmer until tender (about 1–2 hours). *I like to boil my beans for 10 minutes and put them in a thermal cooking bag to leave for 2–4 hours whenever we are ready for them. This takes less fuel or electricity to cook beans and is good in a crisis when fuel is scarce as well as now.

Thermal Cooking

Thermal cooking is great for saving on fuel or for keeping the food you transport still cooking or hot (even cold) or leaving home with food unattended. Your food keeps cooking without an outside heat source. You can buy a thermal cooker on line. You can even use a clothes basket by packing cotton (so they don't melt) towels, pillows, and blankets around your lidded pan. *The inside of your pan should be at least 80% full and at a boil when you pack it into your insulated "cooker." There are some instructions online if you want to know more. Type thermal cooking into Google or YouTube. If you should want to make a thermal bag for yourself here is a link to my favorite set of YouTube instructions.

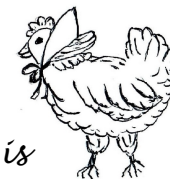
https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=Thermal+cooking+bag

Earthquake at Night

This month's *Friend* has a cute story, "The Earthquake Prayer." Many people don't really know what to do during an earthquake. For instance, it is best to stay in bed and cover your head if you are in bed. You should not change rooms in a quake. For more information about what to do if you are inside during a quake, there are good, simple instructions at the following link.
<https://www.wikihow.com/Deal-With-Being-Indoors-During-an-Earthquake>

This is a good preparedness article worth taking a few minutes to check out and share as a family.

Notes from Red Hen



Dear Cousin Snowflake,

How are things on your farm? There is still snow here, and some nights are just plain cold enough to huddle. However, the days are growing longer. My girls are starting to lay eggs. I am too old to lay many eggs, but I can still sit on eggs and tend chicks. I have a lot I can teach young hens, too. We are deciding what to put in our garden this year. Of course we will plant a lot of wheat so I can make bread. The animals on our farm are starting to understand that when everyone contributes what they can, things turn out for the best. They will help me and I will share my bread. I hope that the farmer and his wife will figure I am too old and tough to think about the stew pot.

Love,

Red